

CLAIMS

We claim:

5 1. A method for enabling simultaneous multi-user editing of an original document, the method comprising the steps of:
 receiving a request from a first user to open the original document;
 determining whether the original document is in use by a
10 second user;
 in response to a determination that the original document is in use by another user, creating a local copy and storing a path of the original document;
 in response to the receipt of a request to save changes to the
15 local copy, determining whether the original document is still in use by another user;
 in response to a determination that the original document is not still in use by another user, merging the local copy with the original document;
20 in response to a determination that the original document is still in use by another user, saving the local copy with the path of the original document, such that a subsequent merge of the saved local copy and the original document can be performed.

25 2. The method of Claim 1, wherein the determination of whether the original document is in use by a second user is made by determining whether an in-use flag is set for the original document.

30 3. The method of Claim 1, further comprising the step of in response to a determination that the original document is still in use by another user, creating an email note with the local copy as an attachment and sending the email note to another user for the subsequent merge.

4. The method of Claim 1, further comprising the step of in response to a determination that the original document is still in use by another user, saving the local copy with the path of the original document, such that 5 another user attempting to open the saved local copy will be prompted to merge the saved local copy with the original document.

5. A computer-readable medium having computer-executable instructions for performing steps comprising:
10 receiving a request from a first user to open the original document; in response to a determination that the original document is in use by a second user, creating and storing a local copy and storing a path of the original document;
15 monitoring the original document; in response to a determination that the original document is no longer in use by another user, notifying the first user that the original document is no longer in use; merging changes made to the local copy into the original
20 document, the location of the original document being identified by the stored path.

6. The computer-readable medium of Claim 5, further comprising the step of storing the path of the original document as a property of 25 the local copy.

7. The computer-readable medium of Claim 5, further comprising the step of storing the path of the original document as a registry key associated with the local copy.
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8. The computer-readable medium of Claim 5, further comprising the step of in response to an attempt to open the stored local copy and

to a determination that the original document is no longer in use by another user, providing a prompt to merge the local copy with the original document.

9. The computer-readable medium of Claim 5, further comprising the step of creating an email note with the local copy as an attachment and sending the email note to another user prior to the merging changes step.

10. The computer-readable medium of Claim 9, further comprising the step of attaching the path of the original document to the email note.

11. The computer-readable medium of Claim 10, wherein the step of creating an email note comprises inserting a default entry into a subject field of the email note.

15 12. The computer-readable medium of Claim 10, wherein the step of creating an email note comprises inserting a default entry into a message body field of the email note.

20 13. A system for enabling simultaneous multi-user editing of an original document, comprising:

a file server operative to maintain an original document at a document location;

25 a document editor operative to make changes to the original document and to set a flag on the original document, the flag indicating that the original document is in use by a first user;

30 wherein, in response to a determination that the flag is set, the document editor is further operative to create a local copy of the original document and to store the document location with the local copy, so that a change to the local copy can be merged with the original document at a later time.

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14. The system of Claim 13, wherein the document location is stored with the local copy as a property of the local copy.

15. The system of Claim 13, wherein the document location is stored with the local copy as a registry key associated with the local copy.

16. The system of Claim 13, wherein the document editor is further operative to provide a prompt to merge the local copy with the original document, in response to an attempt to open the stored local copy.

10 17. The system of Claim 13, wherein the document editor is further operative to cause the creation of an email note with the stored local copy as an attachment and to cause the email note to be sent to another user.

15 18. The system of Claim 13, wherein the document editor is further operative to cause the attachment the path of the original document to the email note.

20 19. The system of Claim 13, wherein the document editor is further operative to cause the insertion of a default entry into a subject field of the email note.

25 20. The system of Claim 13, wherein the document editor is further operative to cause the insertion of a default entry into a message body field of the email note.

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